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submitted that the presently claimed invention, as recited in amended claims 2, 3, 15, and 19, is not prima facie obvious over the disclosures in Mayer and Stearns for the reasons discussed below.

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Referring to FIG. 1 in Stearns, a known intraoral dental camera assembly (10) having a known gripping handle (30) is shown. Stearns describes the known gripping handle (30) as including a pair of tapered half-sections (32, 34), each half-section having a curved interior surface (col. 4, lines 11-15). As the Examiner points out, two half-sections are "snap-fitted" together to form the gripping handle. The Examiner takes the position that it would have been obvious to modify the gripping member (50) in Mayer so that it included two half-sections that could be snap-fitted together.

However, Applicant respectfully submits that even if a person of ordinary skill in the art looked to the disclosure in Stearns and combined it with Mayer, the present invention would not be obvious. As discussed above, Applicants' soft grip includes elastomeric and rigid polymeric walls. The walls are bonded together to form an integral structure - the elastomeric outer wall extending continuously along the length of the rigid polymeric inner wall. Claims 16 and 19 define the soft grip as having first and second half-sections, each half-section being made from a rigid polymer and elastomeric polymer. There is no disclosure or suggestion for a soft grip having such a structure in Stearns. Moreover, a person of ordinary skill in the art would have no basis for modifying the teachings therein to produce such a structure. Thus, even if the disclosure in Mayer were combined with the disclosure in Stearns, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention, as recited in amended claims 2, 3, 10, 16, and 19 would not be obvious. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of claims 2, 3, 10, 16, and 19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Mayer and Stearns be withdrawn.

Applicants have found that such their gripping member, with its dual-wall structure, provides several benefits over conventional gripping surfaces. First, the elastomeric outer wall provides a comfortable and easy grip surface along its entire length. Vibrations, which normally would be transmitted from the sealing insert to the hand of the dental practitioner, are absorbed by the continuous elastomeric wall. Secondly, the practitioner can easily grip the instrument

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anywhere along its outer wall. The elastomeric, easy-grip portion is not limited to a centralized area of the inner wall. This allows the practitioner to feel more comfortable with the instrument. Thirdly, the rigid polymeric wall provides a smooth inner surface so that the gripping member can be securely attached to the sealing insert. Because of this inner wall structure, a durable bond or other means of attachment can be created between the gripping member and insert.

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Conclusion

In summary, Applicants submit that claims 1-3, 5, and 9-20 (as amended) are patentable and each of the Examiner's rejections and objections has been overcome. Accordingly, Applicants request favorable consideration and allowance of amended claims 1-3, 5, and 9-20. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee required in connection with the filing of this paper or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 04-0780. Should there be any outstanding matter that needs to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,
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Attachments: Petition for Extension of Time